

**Benjamin Banneker School # 113    Narrative Capsule Summary**

Located at Greenmount Avenue and Federal Street, the Benjamin Banneker School # 113 faces north on Federal Street. The original building was erected in 1895, and in 1931 a wing was added on the east side of the building.

The earlier building is a rectangular building of two stories faced in brick, with a high basement of rough faced stone. The north and south elevations have three bay end pavilions flanking a wide center section. The central bay on the north elevation is recessed and contains the original main entrance, a tall, narrow arched opening within a stone surround decorated with keystone, garlands and swags, and cornice. All the second story windows are round arched, and on the end pavilions on each elevation, these windows are set within two story recessed bays. The building is capped by a deep cornice with wide dentils, and the roof is a low hip. The architect for the 1895 building is unknown.

The 1931 addition is also two stories faced in brick, but without a basement. The building's recessed bay adjacent to the 1895 building, contains a wide segmental arched opening, banded windows with continuous surrounds, vaguely suggestive of Gibbs surrounds. The recessed wing is topped with battlements. The rest of the building repeats the window treatment of the recessed entrance bay on the north and east elevations, but lacks battlements (although it appears that there was once applied cornice ornament). The architect of the 1931 wing was Benjamin Frank.

**Benjamin Banneker School # 113 Narrative Capsule Summary (continued)**

The school was built as Colored Primary School #10 to serve the African-American children living in the neighboring late 19<sup>th</sup> century rowhouses, which is the defining characteristic of Greenmount West. The 1895 building reflects the earlier influences of H.H Richardson and Louis Sullivan, but also reflects the more contemporary (classical) revival architectural styles of the World's Fair of 1893 and the Philadelphia Exposition of 1876. The 1931 wing reflects the English and European revival styles popular in the United States between the two world wars.

Benjamin Banneker School # 113

1) Historic Period Theme(s):

Architecture  
Education

2) Geographic Organization:

Piedmont

3) Chronological/Development Periods:

Industrial/Urban Dominance  
Modern Period

4) Resource Type(s):

Category:  
Building

Historic Environment:  
Urban

Historic Function(s) and Use(s)  
public school

Known Design Source:  
none

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF  
HISTORIC PROPERTIES

# Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Survey No. B-4637

Magi No.

DOE ☐ yes ☐ no

## 1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Benjamin Banneker School # 113

and/or common Colored Primary # 10

## 2. Location

street & number Greenmont Ave. and Federal St. ☐ not for publication

city, town Baltimore ☐ vicinity of congressional district 7

state Maryland county Baltimore City

## 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

## 4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name City of Baltimore, c/o Daniel Henson III, Commissioner, Dept. of Housing and Community Dev.

street & number 417 East Fayette St. telephone (410) 396-4109

city, town Baltimore state and zip code MD 21202

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Land Records Office for Baltimore City liber

street & number Clarence Mitchell Courthouse, 100 N. Calvert St., 6<sup>th</sup> floor folio

city, town Baltimore state MD 21202

## 6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title

date ☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

## 7. Description

Survey No.

B-4637

### Condition

☐ excellent  
☐ good  
☐ fair

### Check one

☒ deteriorated  
☐ ruins  
☐ unexposed

☐ unaltered  
☒ altered

### Check one

☒ original site  
☐ moved      date of move \_\_\_\_\_

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

### CONTRIBUTING RESOURCE COUNT: 1

The school, with its long, main elevation and main entrances along Federal Street, consists of a 1895 original, nearly square building, with a 1931 rectangular addition built on the east side of the original building. Both buildings are brick-faced and two stories tall, but the 1895 building has a high stone basement. On the main facade of the 1895 building, the end pavilions project. These end pavilions consist of three recessed window bays capped by round arches. All second story windows in the 1895 are round arched as are the exterior openings. The building culminates in a deep cornice supported by dentils. The 1895 building is a strong three dimensional massing vaguely reminiscent of the buildings of H.H. Richardson and Louis Sullivan, relieved by colonial or classical revival detailing, such as in the entrance surround. By contrast the 1931 addition lacks the earlier building's sense of mass. The 1931 addition consists of flat walls with minimal detailing, an apparently flat roof, no round arches or sense of depth, except for the recessed bay with its battlement on the north elevation of the 1931 addition where it abuts the 1895 building.

The three dimensional quality of the 1895 building's exterior is repeated on the interior on the first floor where north-south corridor and the openings to the stairs all have round arches. The classrooms are well lit, rectangular rooms with transom lights bringing natural lighting from the classrooms to the long east-west corridor. Little decorative detailing survives in the ceiling and walls of the 1895 building.

The interior of the 1895 building is badly deteriorated, with water and fire damage. Ceilings and floors have gaping holes as do the second floor windows that are not boarded up. Paneling as well as bathroom fixtures have been removed. A few rooms and the basement were inaccessible because of the piled up debris on stairs and weakened floors. The second floor, as well as the first floor, has extensive pigeon droppings. Large numbers of pigeons are nesting in the roof rafters.

The interior of the 1931 addition is free of pigeon, water, and fire damage, but the floor and wall surfaces are spalling. The glazed tiles are intact along the stairwalls and east-west corridors (which also have light transoms). The most interesting space is the southeast classroom on first floor as it contains a fireplace on the east wall, and the room's large space is divided by folding, paneled partition doors.

At present, the 1931 addition has six classrooms on the second floor and five classrooms on the first floor, with bathrooms on both floor. The 1895 building has five classrooms on the second floor and three classrooms, with possibly a small fourth classroom. According to the floorplan prepared by the Baltimore City Public Schools Department of Facilities (attached), the 1895 building had bathrooms in the basement and a health center in the northeast corner of the first floor. The *School Plant Directory Vol. 1, 1952* (Bureau of Research, Baltimore City Public Schools) stated the school had 20 classrooms.

The school lot has an asphalt playground to the south and small asphalt lots on the east and west of the building. South of the asphalt playground, the rest of the block is a vacant lot, with debris.

To the east, across Greenmount Avenue, the tall stone wall of the Greenmount Cemetery faces the school. North and west (respectively) on Federal Street and Brentwood Avenue, row houses face the school. To the south on the south side of Oliver Street a large, vacant industrial building faces the school.

## 8. Significance

Survey No. B-4637 B-4637

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below					
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation		
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)		

Specific dates 1895, 1931 Builder/Architect Benjamin Frank (addition)

check: Applicable Criteria: ☐ A ☒ B ☐ C ☐ D  
and/or

Applicable Exception: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Level of Significance: ☐ national ☒ state ☐ local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

The 1895 building and its 1931 addition represent architectural styles popular during those periods. In addition, the school was built at a time of change for the Baltimore public schools, and reflects the demographic history of Greenmount West.

The 1895 Benjamin Banneker School #113 building blends the various revival architectural style popular at the very end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. By 1895 the robust Richardsonian Romanesque was long past its peak popularity, but apparent in the school's massive, rusticated basement and the deep voids of the arched openings. Louis Sullivan replaced Richardsonian textured surfaces with ornamental detail, created rows of arched bays, and often culminated his buildings with deep cornices, all features apparent in the 1895 building. Sullivan's contemporaries went much farther than Sullivan in emphasizing colonial and classical architecture as design sources and playing down the three dimensional quality of the exterior, again features seen in the 1895 building. The 1895 building blends Richardsonian, Sullivanesque and the colonial and classical revival tastes made popular by the 1876 and 1893 exhibitions.

The 1931 addition reflects the early 20<sup>th</sup> century American revival of English and European architectural styles, especially medieval styles for schools, universities, and other institutional buildings.

The Baltimore public schools were rigidly segregated from after the Civil War for approximately 100 years. The city maintained two school systems, both controlled by whites, with very little resources going to the black districts. Despite tremendous growth of the black school population in the 1880s, the expenditures went to the white schools. Perhaps to correct this imbalance to some small degree, the only school completed in Baltimore in 1895 was Colored Primary School #10, later renamed the Benjamin Banneker School # 113. At the same time, the Republican reform politicians were wrestling control of the government and the schools from the Democratic machine. In the 1890s the school board undertook to improve the appearance of the buildings and the teachers' and students' comfort in the classrooms. In fact, in 1895 prominent Baltimore architects were hired to design the schools, but it is unknown if one of them designed this school. (see *MD Historical Magazine* and history of Baltimore schools prepared by MD. Trust)

Greenmount West, the approximately thirteen block historic area north of the downtown, "embodies the distinctive characteristics of late nineteenth century Baltimore rowhouses from a specific time period... Nearly all the housing in Greemount West was built between 1880 and 1900. The area was developed primarily for the middle class, however poor, black and working class households..." The two schools and one church in Greenmount West date from the late 1880s and mid- 1890s. "The time period for the construction of these community related structures is indicative of the era when Greenmount West was reaching the culmination of its development." (see CHAP vertical files)

The Benjamin Banneker School #113, which closed in 1984, reflected both the changing architectural tastes of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century as well as the changing demographics of Greenmount West. The school was built at or near the height of the development of the neighborhood and the addition was built in response to another increase in



## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. B-4637

See continuation sheet

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle name \_\_\_\_\_ .21 acres

Quadrangle scale \_\_\_\_\_

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references  
Baltimore East, MD, SE/4 Baltimore 15' Quad

1:24000

A 

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Zone Easting NorthingB 

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Zone Easting NorthingC 

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D 

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E 

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F 

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G 

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H 

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

Ward 12, section 10, block 1120, lots 2-7. This is the legal description of the property.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title

Bill Lebovich, architectural historian and architectural photographer

organization

date

2/24/99

street &amp; number

7302 Summit Avenue

telephone

(301) 654-3519

city or town

Chevy Chase

state

MD. 20815

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to:

Maryland Historical Trust  
Shaw House  
21 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
(301) 269-2438

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST.  
DHCP/DHCD  
100 COMMUNITY PLACE  
CROWNSVILLE, MD 21032-2023  
514-7600

Benjamin Banneker School # 113

Continuation Sheet

**8. Significance**

neighborhood school population or in recognition that the black school population had been underserved.



Benjamin Banneker School # 113

Continuation Sheet

**9. Major Bibliographic References**

Peter E. Kurtze and Marcia M. Miller, *Baltimore City School Architecture, 1829-1941*, prepared for the Office of Research Survey and Registration, MD Historical Trust, September 1990.

Andrea R. Andrews, "The Baltimore School Building Program, 1870-1900: A Study of Urban Reform", *Maryland Historical Magazine*, Vol. 70, No. 3, Fall 1975.

Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation, City of Baltimore, 417 E. Fayette Street, Baltimore :  
Vertical Files on Greenmont West.

**Baltimore City Schools:**

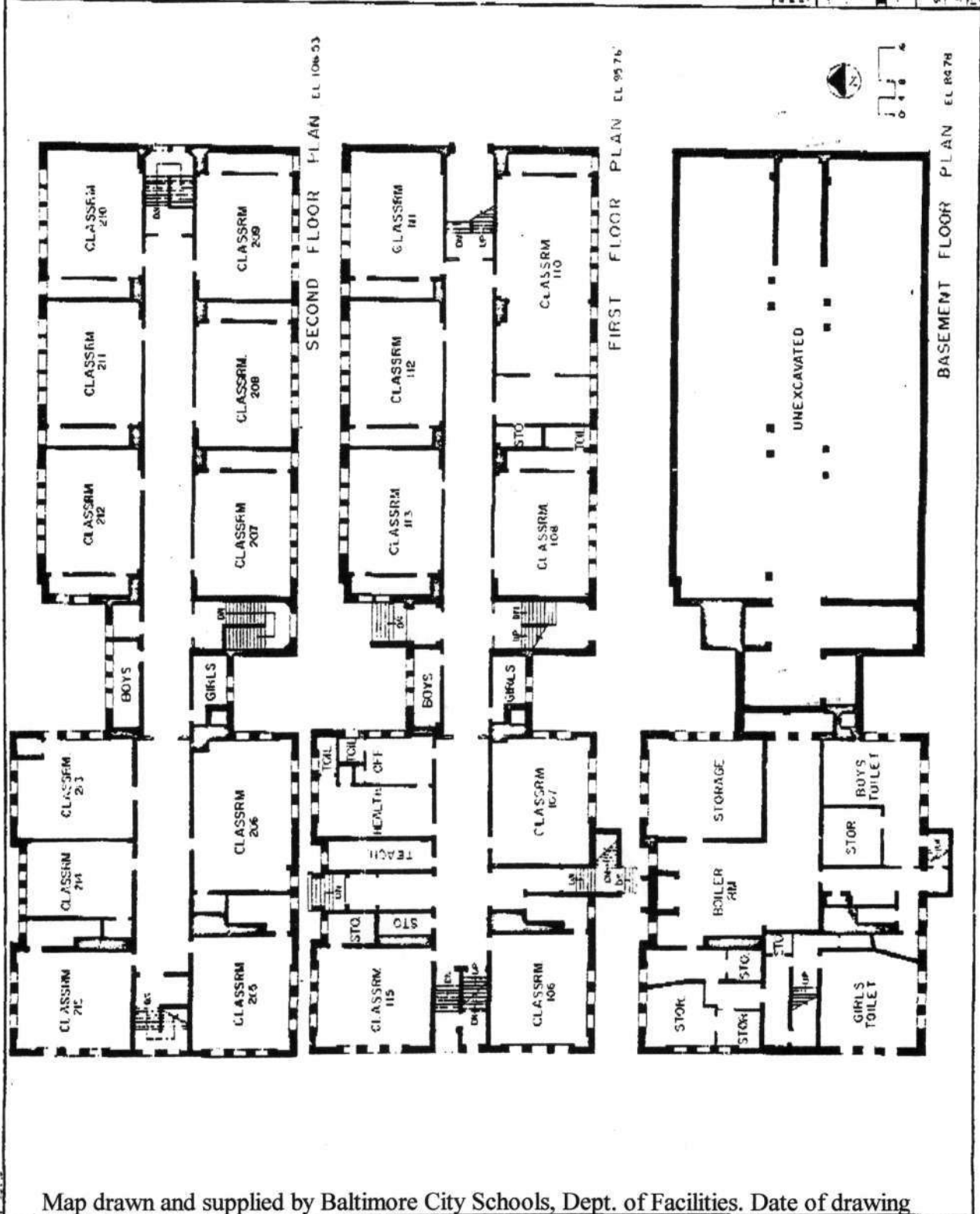
*Annual Reports of School Boards (Dept. of Student Placement & Planning)*

*School Plant Directory, Vol. 1, 1952 (Bureau of Research)*

*building plans ( Dept. of facilities)*

*index cards on each school (Dept. of Student Placement & Planning)*

note: items 1,3, and 4 are available at the Administrative Headquarters for  
Baltimore City Schools, 200 E North Ave., Baltimore

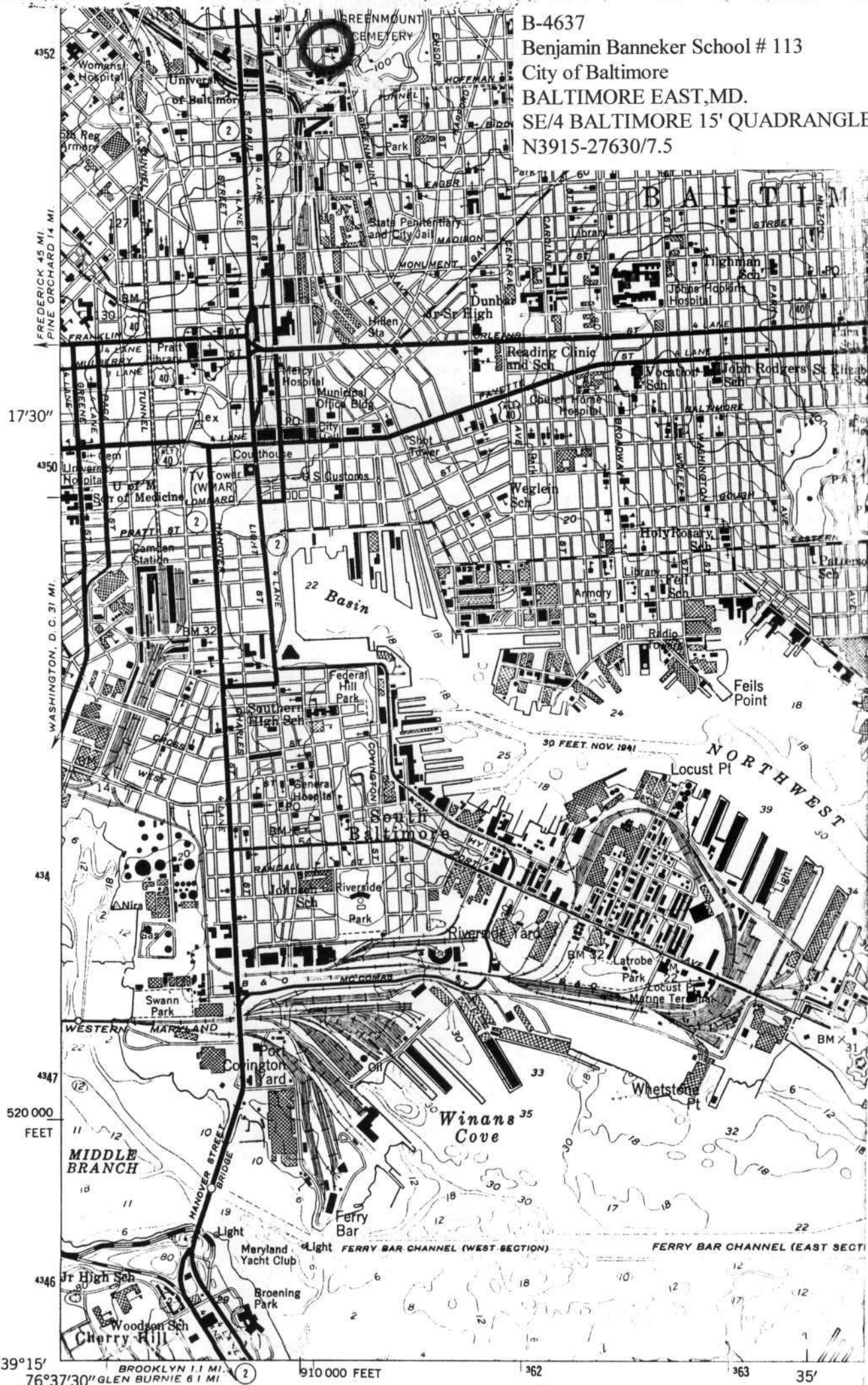


B-4637

Benjamin Banneker School #113  
Greenmont Avenue and Federal Street  
Baltimore, Maryland

SEE SPECIAL PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLECTION FOR B&W  
PRINTS AND OVERSIZED NEGATIVES.

B-4637  
Benjamin Banneker School # 113  
City of Baltimore  
BALTIMORE EAST, MD.  
SE/4 BALTIMORE 15' QUADRANGLE  
N3915-27630/7.5



B-4637  
Benjamin Banneker School #113 (Colored Primary #10)  
Corner of Greenmont Avenue & E. Federal Street  
Block 1120 Lot 002  
Baltimore City  
Baltimore East Quad

